

# naturejobs

**THE CAREERS  
MAGAZINE FOR  
SCIENTISTS**

**T**his issue introduces the 2009 class of *Naturejobs* Postdoc Journal keepers. As usual, the competition for our four spots was intense. This year's crop was chosen from 60 applicants from 20 countries, working in a variety of fields — from marine-resource management to behavioural neuroscience.

The winners demonstrated wit, a knack for writing, intriguing backgrounds and a keen insight into the challenges and dilemmas facing postdocs of all backgrounds.

Three of the journal keepers have more than research to keep them busy, as parenthood has introduced the familiar challenges of a work-life balance. Journal keeper Julia Boughner, a British-born postdoc in evolutionary developmental biology at the University of Calgary in Canada, describes her predicament as “the race to secure a tenure-track position before family and other personal demands drive me out of my dream of academia”. Boughner models the mechanisms of human craniofacial variation in a morphometrics lab.

Joanne Isaac, studying the impact of climate change on tropical systems and species at James Cook University in Queensland, Australia, is also juggling a postdoc, motherhood and a relationship. Isaac delved into the life history of brushtail possums as a graduate student. Bryan Venters, a postdoc at Pennsylvania State University at University Park, is a new father weighing up the merits of industry versus academia for his future. Venters studies gene regulatory mechanisms as a postdoc; he mapped genome-wide locations of yeast transcription before that.

Sam Walcott described a different but increasingly common set of challenges: how to plan one's career and training as an interdisciplinary scientist. Trained in theoretical and applied mathematics, Walcott is a theoretical biophysics postdoc at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, where he focuses on molecular biomechanical models related to muscles. He wonders if a fledgling interdisciplinary scientist, by focusing on just one discipline during his postdoc, adversely affects his career.

I hope readers will look forward to tracking our journal keepers' progress as they pursue their own career aims. And I offer my thanks to all those who applied.

**Gene Russo is editor of *Naturejobs*.**

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